
OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by JES - 2012/01/15 02:11

Hi Folks,

I know I'm not the only person here interested in using the OT to produce drones and massive pads from interesting source materials (field recordings, music, etc). I would love to hear how others have been setting it up to achieve these effects, and audio samples would be appreciated.

My original plan was to try and get the OT to behave like a granular synthesizer in software (since it sure sounds like it's a granular processor when you set rate to timestrech mode and I have always dreamed of a hardware granular synth). My approach has been to slow down audio to zero or near-zero, add LFOs to start, length and rate, run it through echo and/or reverb. But because there's no window length or density parameter for the frozen audio, you can't add jitter to those parameters and so can't get the same effects that are so useful for producing massive soundscapes in granular synths.

But it occurs to me that rather than trying to fit the OT into my preconceived concept of granular synthesis, there may be other ways to achieve huge drones, pads and soundscapes from source material that I haven't considered, so I'd love to hear what others are doing .

Thanks. I could, of course, do all this in software and then mangle the pads in the OT, but if there are OT-native options, so that you can do it in real time, all the better.

And yes, i've enjoyed the Sweet Caroline video.

--JES

BTW, in software I like audio ease riverrun, densitygs, reaktor, and occasionally I use granite.

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by Lindsay - 2012/01/15 07:24

I'm also interested in techniques to do this.

I guess the lfo randomly changing start points through masses of delay, perhaps on neighbouring tracks is the way to go.

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by earsmack - 2012/01/15 09:24

This thread has some great potential.

I think sampling in something pad-like and then using LFO to adjust the various params that have been mentioned (start time, length, etc.) is a good start.

I also like to slice a sample up into as many slices as possible and modulate the slice param for each step or use the random slice trigs. If it's too clicky I'll apply a little low-pass filter to smooth it out. A high delay with a lot of feedback and/or reverb will also help.

Also adjust the attack and release to smooth things out a bit as well. Using a similar technique on separate tracks but using trigs that are opposite each other can also help to keep release times longer and also for some nice interplay between similar material to allow for chorusing, etc.

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by Lindsay - 2012/01/15 10:10

It would be great if a future update were to include a more 'spacious' reverb. Something to produce a shimmer effect would be a great addition to generate pads.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by Scott - 2012/01/15 10:11

I'm getting mileage out of static several tracks of single-cycle waves with slow detune LFOs and lots of reverb. The comb filter adds great harmonic elements to the overall sound, and you can carve out where you want each voice to sit in the mix with filter and eq. Subtle panning LFO makes the pad a little more trippy.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by pulsn - 2012/01/15 17:53

Let's talk about source material...i noticed on other sampler (V-Synth e.g.) a simple piano sound with long decay is a great source for drone stuff. Also i used my field recorder to catch the droning atmosphere inside a running fast train. Slow that sound down...instant drone! Same with a car passing by...the sound of a dishwasher. Refridgerator....and so on. Combine that with what was said above. :woohoo: B)

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by PlayRecords - 2012/01/15 21:20

^ starting with long sustaining sounds with lots of harmonics makes sense.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by JES - 2012/01/15 21:43

Yeah, the other thing about field recordings for granulation is that I break a lot of "rules" of recording. I don't worry about traditional sound quality concerns with source material. I mostly just listen for textures and collect a lot of stuff.

One of my favorite drones came out of a scraping broken escalator in the Montreal metro with a humming heater in the background. It sounded terrible. I only had my iPhone and was on my way to work, so I recorded it walking by, without worrying about mic position, levels or sticking around to get a good take.

Slowed down and tuned down and run through a delay, it sounded amazing. I still believe that the fact that there's no fixed position on the sound adds a whole other level of movement and interest, but with all the delay I put on nobody could probably tell except me.

It's the first thing you head in this track: <http://unlikelyevent.net/track/eponymous>

Just to be clear, I didn't make that with the OT, though.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by poonti - 2012/01/15 23:41

Nice track! I often think I should have a recorder of some sort, running around the metro you hear all sorts of interesting sounds.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by xheindrichs - 2012/01/16 00:43

When the purpose is to slow down a sample, is it beter to record in the highest sample rate available? For example 96khz?

When we slow down a 96khz sample for about one octave (or 1/2 its speed), does it become a 48khz sample?

Bye

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by JES - 2012/01/16 01:05

@Poonti: thanks!

@xhendrichs: personally, I don't get hung up on specifications. I think you'll run into the OT's limitations before the 96/48k issue comes up.

For me, if I'm not even going to worry about mic technique (at least in a conventional way), sample rate other than basic compatibility isn't going to be a big issue. My goal is to so radically transform the sample that the original material is more "inspiration" than anything else. Of course, perhaps you have a completely different goal in mind.

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by RonF - 2012/01/16 02:01

Just to add to the discussion in a different direction....OT rules for creating granular-ish drones....but pair it with an Eventide (Space, Eclipse, etc), and you are in another universe. This includes resampling the reverb back into the OT for further mangling. OT is a dream for drone experiments....but Eventide reverbs are classic fundamentals for drones. Put the two together, and you have drone bliss! B)

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by prscrptn - 2012/01/16 07:12

JES wrote:

this track: <http://unlikelyevent.net/track/eponymous>

Very Nice. B)

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by JES - 2012/01/16 11:12

thanks again!

@RonF: you've got a good point about reverb. I've got a couple nice analog delays -- although the OT's delay is really quite good. I am really missing reverb on the OT, especially because I have some good ITB 'verbs. I have an old Digitech DSP 128 (bought used for nothing in the late 80s--and its value has certainly declined!) but the bigger settings aren't good enough to do anything except make me want better reverb. I'm not yet ready to commit \$500 to Eventide for the Space, so my baby step is an Alesis Wedge (it's on its way), which was good enough for lots of ambient and electronic acts around the turn of the century even though I'm sure its specs pale in comparison with the Eventide. We'll see how that helps out in a week or two when it arrives.

--JES

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by jonah - 2012/01/16 12:32

Headphone and/or cue outs to audio in with various effects chains, but mind your ears. An external limiter or device that will clip the audio nicely can be useful here. This can also be combined with multiple record trigs to make some nice cascading effects.

Another variation on this is to use a cheap unpowered mic and headphones and play around with making them feedback. Depending on the space you are in the sound of the room can add a lot of interest to the sound and it's often more "playable" since you can position the mic and headphones to cause varying levels of feedback.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by pulsn - 2012/01/16 18:03

Fully agreed!

<http://vimeo.com/35098716>

in the beginning you hear a drone from the OT running through Eventide Space and Timefactor.B)

When you record with iPhone, what app do you use?

Is there also an iPhone app, that is recording automatically for five seconds every ten minutes or so?

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by Lindsay - 2012/01/16 19:46

prscrptn wrote:

JES wrote:

this track: <http://unlikelyevent.net/track/eponymous>

Very Nice. B)

Second that.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by xheindrichs - 2012/01/17 00:18

Of course, perhaps you have a completely different goal in mind.

... Indeed... I was thinking about how to record when we want to detune without bringing some artefacts.

Pulsn, your vid is great!!

Bye

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by MrSysex - 2012/01/17 06:34

xheindricks wrote:

When the purpose is to slow down a sample, is it beter to record in the highest sample rate available? For example 96khz?

When we slow down a 96khz sample for about one octave (or 1/2 its speed), does it become a 48khz sample?

Bye

This was my first thought...

I know that if you load 22kHz samples they play back twice as fast. I've done so. I don't know if it'll load 96k samples and just play them halfspeed though. The OT supports playing 44.1k, but other frequencies seem to play, just at the wrong speed. I would guess it's the same if you resample at a higher rate; it'll just play back at the slower (44.1) rate.

I don't know if I'd say it'll sound better... but it's one potential way to double your stretch time.

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by 5id - 2012/01/17 23:07

RonF wrote:

....but pair it with an Eventide (Space, Eclipse, etc), and you are in another universe.

Thanks for the tips on the Eventide Space, purchased one of those little babies this morning and i'm very happy :)

Thanks to pulsfn for giving a lovely example of the OT and Eventide, you guy's are full of excellent ideas to spice things up. ;)

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by RonF - 2012/01/18 01:55

Oh you are gonna love it! Remember...a huge secret to droning is to resample the Space's output back into OT! Radical!!!! B)

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by 5id - 2012/01/18 02:10

RonF wrote:

Oh you are gonna love it! Remember...a huge secret to droning is to resample the Space's output back into OT! Radical!!!! B)

Thank's man, as you say the OT and Eventide takes you to another universe !

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by xheindricks - 2012/01/19 18:39

Thank you, MrSysex!

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by Bergdahl - 2012/01/20 02:53

I stumbled on a granular sounding set up on the octatrack today while just improvising with my guitar..
I really have no idea what the OT is doing it just started to sound like Fennesz and Alvo Noto.. so i just went along with it.. guitar and Octatrack, live sampling, looping nothing prerecorded.

<http://soundcloud.com/anders-bergdahl/noise-interacts-with>

as said i need to understand what it does but it most def is doing some sort of granular pad stuff..
I like these sounds a lot.. you may not ;)

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by RonF - 2012/01/20 03:34

Thats really cool!

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by JES - 2012/01/20 04:46

@Bergdahl -- super interesting. Did you just hit random locks or something to get it to freak out like that? Would love to know how you set it up for sampling, and how you're interacting with it between the guitar and the OT.

I play bass and am very keen to get things happening with a foot controller (maybe my KMI soft step if I can get my head around programming it for the OT and train it to behave with my very wide feet).

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by Bergdahl - 2012/01/20 05:21

JES wrote:

@Bergdahl -- super interesting. Did you just hit random locks or something to get it to freak out like that? Would love to know how you set it up for sampling, and how you're interacting with it between the guitar and the OT.

I play bass and am very keen to get things happening with a foot controller (maybe my KMI soft step if I can get my head around programming it for the OT and train it to behave with my very wide feet).

For this the track that gets the granular thing happening is track set to record A + itself, i have a record trigger on 1 and a playback in one...

I had it set up for looping, no pitchshift or rate shift.. by mistake I set the rate to zero BUT i suppose it did not want to record itself at the wrong rate so it just played the grains a few times with echo on..

and i think some lofi stuff..(ohh and rate it set NOT to pitch just slow down the digital way not the tape way..

then another track record that track in occasion and plays it back with pitch shift.

I just sad and expanded in the idea/mistake and some rather wild things can be achieved with resampling on other tracks with TRIGG pitch shifts and stuff

I dont use mids yet i either have triggered sampling or trigger once, there is no need to play constantly since the OT can sound rather full by itself..

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by Lindsay - 2012/02/01 09:42

Scott wrote:

I'm getting mileage out of static several tracks of single-cycle waves with slow detune LFOs and lots of reverb. The comb filter adds great harmonic elements to the overall sound, and you can carve out where you want each voice to sit in

the mix with filter and eq. Subtle panning LFO makes the pad a little more trippy.

Scott, about this..are you triggering the sample on each of the 16 steps and then setting a slow attack?

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by skab - 2012/02/01 23:46

Bergdahl wrote:

I stumbled on a granular sounding set up on the octatrack today whole just improvising with my guitar...

Brilliant! This is such a great combination of looping and improvisation! Makes me wonder, what if Calexico ever took a trip way down south with a bag of peyote and the collected works of William Blake:)

I've been experimenting with my Olympus field recorder. Recording train / rain / traffic / lift Muzak at 96khz, putting the samples into ableton and dropping them down to -12 semitones using the texture algorithm and then sampling them into the OT using a bit of HP filter to knock off the bottom end. Also discovered that my Blofeld with highly overdriven filters, pitched down using the rate control = lo-fi love. I'd REALLY like to hear somebody using the same trick with a real analogue synth. Might have to start saving my money for a marriage-ending modular:P

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by r05c03 - 2012/03/28 21:50

I still have problems with things sounding like they are looping rather than continuously evolving. How to mitigate this?

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by skab - 2012/03/29 06:11

Use very slow LFOs?

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by jonah - 2012/03/29 11:25

LFO a LFO that LFOs a LFO that LFOs an effect parameter. :silly:

Slowly.

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/25 06:21

Glad I found this thread. I'm going to try to create a more drone/ambient leaning piece on the Octatrack. Now that we have Dark Reverb, I don't think I need a Space anymore. ;)

If anyone has found some great Dark Reverb settings for super long decaying trails and such, please post! B)

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by the dreammer - 2013/06/25 06:33

jonah wrote:
LFO a LFO that LFOs a LFO that LFOs an effect parameter. :silly:

Slowly.

For some reason this reminds me of:
Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_buffalo_Buffalo_buffalo_buffalo_buffalo_Buffalo_buffalo
wonder why though..

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/08/26 09:24

I'm still getting started with this aspect of music making on the Octatrack. I did indeed find that increasing Rate on the Playback page introduced a stuttering effect to a Flex Machine track that was playing back slices (64-slice grid, random trigger locks) of sampled viola audio.

However with Effect 1 set to Filter, I found that messing with RTRG and RTIM also generated some unexpected sounds. RTRG at around 20 and RTIM turned down to about 0.2 generated a bass-heavy sequence line with some overtones. The speed might still be a bit too fast for some approaches to ambient music, but I'll probably keep playing around with this and see where this takes me.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/08/28 23:06

My first attempt at making ambient music with just viola and Octatrack in one take. I screwed some things up but I'm learning some new skills that I plan to keep practicing:

Pseudo-ambient nonsense on Octatrack and viola

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by neilbaldwin - 2013/08/28 23:31

My tip: don't try to automate everything, leave some stuff to performance (knob twiddling and crossfader work)

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/08/28 23:47

neilbaldwin wrote:

My tip: don't try to automate everything, leave some stuff to performance (knob twiddling and crossfader work)

Good tip. In my case, I forgot to reset all my LFO settings, track volume settings, etc. before I started my loop-based jam last night. These were among my aforementioned screwups.

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by josker - 2013/08/29 05:50

Inspired by this thread, I tried the Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo approach.

Of course in this case it's something like LFO LFO LFO delay delay LFO LFO delay delay delay delay.

You were right about the LFOs!

I've always wanted to create stuff like this, and was actually pleasantly surprised by how easy it is on the Octatrack. It's mostly one sample processed in different ways in the Octatrack. Some percussive samples, too. I also added a few delays and whatnot in Ableton.

<https://soundcloud.com/misnaps/worker>

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Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/08/29 06:08

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<https://soundcloud.com/misnaps/worker>

Nice! Did you use a Thru machine to get additional delay on top of delay? I didn't quite get the "buffalo" reference but if that's what that means...

You guys inspire me to up my own ambient game.

=====

Re:OT: Drones and Pads techniques

Posted by josker - 2013/08/29 06:31

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Nice! Did you use a Thru machine to get additional delay on top of delay? I didn't quite get the "buffalo" reference but if that's what that means...

You guys inspire me to up my own ambient game.

Somebody brought up that buffalo sentence and pasted the link, a few messages ago :)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_buffalo_Buffalo_buffalo_buffalo_buffalo_Buffalo_buffalo

And thanks! I used a neighbor machine on one track, yes, but TBH also much of the delay is from Ableton's included devices - an auto filter, a couple of filter delays, a resonator during one part, a grain delay...

I'm going to do this again soon - hope other people get their sounds up too, would love to hear them!

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